

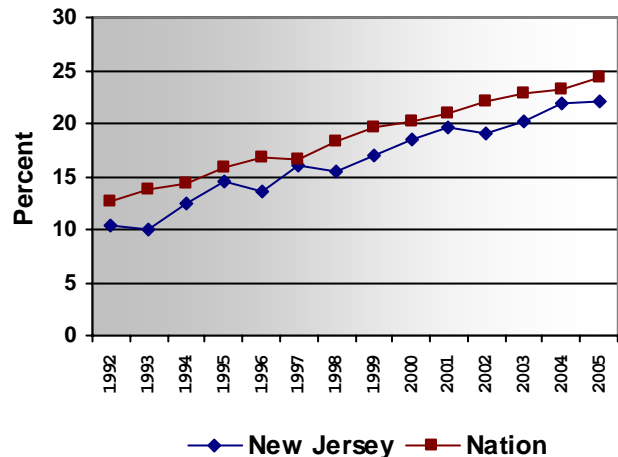
HEALTH DATA FACT SHEET July 2006

Obesity in New Jersey

OVERVIEW:

- ❖ Obesity, defined as the excess accumulation of body fat, is a growing health problem. Obesity is a known risk factor for numerous chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, gall bladder disease, arthritis, breathing problems, and some forms of cancer.
- ❖ The rate of obesity is rising nationwide, creating what is being called an *obesity epidemic*, particularly among men and young children. One in three Americans, or 58 million people, are considered overweight or obese.
- ❖ A person is considered obese if their body mass index (BMI) is over 30.0. BMI is determined by dividing a person's weight in kilograms by height in meters squared. Generally, obesity is the excess accumulation of body fat. One is considered overweight when the BMI is between 25.0 and 29.9.

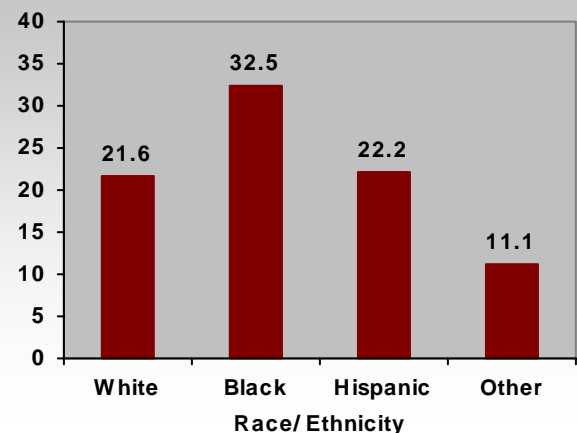
**Figure 1. New Jersey vs.
Nationwide Obesity Trends, 1992-2005**
Source: BRFSS



NEW JERSEY FACTS:

- ❖ Consistent with nationwide trends, obesity has been rising steadily in New Jersey since the early nineties. However, New Jersey's obesity rates are slightly lower than national rates (Figure 1). According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), in 2005, 37 percent of New Jerseyans were overweight and 22 percent were obese.
- ❖ The 2003 New Jersey Student Health Survey found that 10% of ninth to twelfth graders were overweight and another fifteen percent were at risk for becoming overweight.
- ❖ A study conducted in 2003 by the New Jersey Departments of Health and Senior Services and Education found that 20 percent of sixth graders evaluated were obese and another 18 percent were overweight. Higher obesity levels were observed among the sixth grade boys as compared to girls.

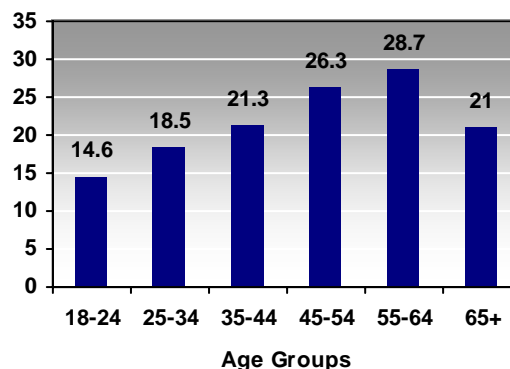
**Figure 2. Obesity Prevalence by
race/ethnicity, New Jersey, 2005**
Source: BRFSS



NEW JERSEY FACTS CONTINUED:

- ❖ The prevalence of obesity is significantly higher among blacks when compared to all other groups. In 2005, thirty-two percent of blacks were obese. This percentage was significantly higher than the 22 percent of whites and Hispanics who were obese. (Figure 2)
- ❖ A majority of New Jersey residents (56%) are at risk for health problems related to being overweight (based on BMI). Nationally, nearly 80 percent of diabetes patients are obese; 70 percent of diagnosed cases of heart disease are related to obesity; 26 percent of obese people suffer from hypertension; and almost half of breast cancer cases are diagnosed among obese women.
- ❖ New Jerseyans between the ages of 45 and 64 are significantly more obese than other age groups. (Figure 3)

Figure 3. Percentage of obese persons by age groups, New Jersey 2005
Source: BRFSS



NEW JERSEY PROGRAM INFORMATION:

- ❖ The state of New Jersey Department of Agriculture has mandated a set of nutrition rules to be implemented in New Jersey schools in an effort to combat childhood obesity and health problems. In short, the rules state that sugared sodas and candy will not be offered to students at school and that fruits, vegetables, lowfat milk, and whole grains will be featured in school cafeterias. Furthermore, children will be instructed on the problems of obesity within their core curriculum and will also be given health education about nutrition.
- ❖ The New Jersey Obesity Prevention Action Plan prepared by the New Jersey Obesity Prevention Task Force, was completed in June 2006. This comprehensive action plan addresses the unique and diverse needs of New Jerseyans. The plan is comprised of seven major sections: infrastructure, public/professional awareness, community, schools, workplace, health care systems, and disparities. The plan will serve as the framework for a statewide, coordinated effort to support and enhance obesity prevention among New Jersey residents.
- ❖ In 2005, Governor Richard J. Codey implemented GetFitNJ Challenge, a program that encourages both children and adults to participate in some form of physical activity every day. New Jersey residents were asked to pledge to participate in a physical activity for a minimum of 30 minutes five days a week for six consecutive weeks.
- ❖ The financial cost for treating the health problems that are related to obesity are very high and rising. The health consequences of obesity are well documented. Prevention of obesity, especially among children, is critical in combating the epidemic in New Jersey as well as throughout the nation.

SOURCES:

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, [Center for Health Statistics](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey data](#)

[Obesity in America](#); [Overweight and Obesity Facts](#); New Jersey's [school nutrition policy](#)

[Get Fit New Jersey Program](#); [New Jersey Department of Personnel Working Well NJ Program](#)



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